

Message Text

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UNCLAS LUXEMBOURG 0380

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EEC

SUBJ: THORN ON DIRECT ELECTION OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

SUMMARY: SPEAKING TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THORN EXPRESSED
OPTIMISM THAT A SOLUTION TO THE NUMBER AND DISTRIBUTION OF
SEATS IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT COULD BE WORKED OUT AND
ADOPTED BY THE JULY EUROPEAN COUNCIL. END SUMMARY.

1. IN A SPEECH BEFORE THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON APRIL 7,
PRIME MINISTER THORN, SPEAKING IN HIS CAPACITY AS PRESIDENT
OF THE EEC, DISCUSSED ELECTION OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT BY
UNIVERSAL SUFFERAGE IN LIGHT OF THE APRIL 1 AND 2 EUROPEAN
COUNCIL. THORN EXPRESSED REGRET THAT, ALTHOUGH VARIOUS
PROBLEMS WERE RESOLVED, THE MAIN PROBLEM, DISTRIBUTION OF
SEATS, WAS NOT RESOLVED. HE EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THE
WILLINGNESS EXPRESSED BY ALL MEMBER STATES TO ABIDE BY
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DECISIONS TAKEN IN ROME, IN PARTICULAR THE DECISION TO

HOLD ELECTIONS IN MAY/JUNE 1978.

2. THE ONLY REMAINING PROBLEM, THORN SAID, IS THE DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS. HE NOTED THAT PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING HAD SUBMITTED A PROPOSAL WHICH WOULD ENTAIL MAINTAINING THE PRESENT NUMBER AND DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS. THORN SAID THE PROPOSAL HAS THE ADVANTAGES OF NOT DEPARTING FROM A FAMILIAR SYSTEM ACCEPTED BY ALL AND OF NOT, AT LEAST IN GISCARD'S EYES, REQUIRING AMMENDMENT OF THE TREATIES. IT NONTHELESS CREATED DOUBTS AND CONCERN ABOUT ELECTORAL PROBLEMS IN INDIVIDUAL MEMBER STATES. SEVERAL HEADS OF GOVERNMENT EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN THE PROPOSAL BUT MAINTAINED THEIR PREFERENCE FOR A PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM OF THE TYPE PROPOSED BY THE PARLIAMENT. THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL INVITED THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS TO GRAPPLE ONCE MORE WITH THE PROBLEM AND TO ENDEAVOR TO COME UP WITH AN AGREEMENT.

3. THORN NOTED THAT THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WAS INVITED TO STUDY OTHER POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS IN ADDITION TO PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING'S SUGGESTION, WHICH WOULD NATURALLY INCLUDE FORMULAS PROPOSED BY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. HE ADDED THAT THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL HAD AGREED THAT THE ISSUE SHOULD BE RESOLVED AT ITS NEXT MEETING IN JULY.

4. THORN CONCLUDED BY PROMISING TO DO HIS UTMOST TO SEE THAT THE COUNCIL FINDS A SOLUTION TO THE SEATING PROBLEM. HE SAID HE HAD ALREADY PLACED THE ISSUE ON THE AGENDA OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE FOREIGN MINISTERS COUNCIL. HE CALLED THE PROBLEM POLITICAL AND SAID THAT A POLITICAL SOLUTION MUST BE FOUND. IN THE MEANTIME HE SAID TECHNICAL WORK ON OTHER SECTIONS OF THE DRAFT ACT CAN PROCEED APACE SO THAT ONCE AN AGREEMENT ON SEATING IS REACHED IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO MOVE IMMEDIATELY TO THE ADOPTION OF A LEGAL ACT. HE SAID IT WAS BOTH HIS FIRM RESOLVE AND HIS REASONABLE HOPE THAT THE COUNCIL WILL SUCCEED. PHILLIPS

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